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In 1983 Richard Hall viewed the sociological study of the professions as near death. However, had Hall examined the recent British literature he would have come to a very different conclusion. Our survey shows that this is a very active area of research and theorizing and that there are important lessons in it for American students of the professions. First, unlike the American literature, work in Britain has not been dominated by fruitless efforts to find the characteristics that differentiate professions from other occupations. Second, the British literature contains four distinctive characteristics that differentiate it from the American literature. They are a focus on inter- and intraprofessional conflicts, the relationship between the professions and the polity, the link between the professions and social stratification, and theoretical roots in the classic ideas of observers such as Marx and Weber. Third, the realities examined in the British literature lead us to conclude that the professions will continue to be an active social force. It is imperative that the American literature be redirected to deal with these developments.

The Sociology of the Professions

DEAD OR ALIVE?

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This article is motivated by several debatable points about the study of the professions made by Richard Hall (1983) in his generally useful review of the sociology of occupations. Those points relate to the near disappearance of sociological interest in the professions, the ascendancy of the power paradigm, and the idea that in order to further explicate that paradigm we need to look outside the domain of the sociological study of the professions.

First, Hall (1983: 11) reported “the decline and near disappearance of papers on the professions and professionalization [that] would make it appear that this category of occupations is no longer meaningful to

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sociologists." However, while Hall was announcing, and seeming to support the idea of, the death of the sociological study of the professions, there was an outpouring of studies of the professions in journals and books published in Great Britain. In his review of the field, Hall had focused on American journals (as well as the French journal *Sociologie Du Travail*), but had he examined the British journals he might well have come to a very different conclusion about the current status of the sociological study of the professions. Ironically, at the very same time, Halliday (1983: 345) was writing in the *European Journal of Sociology* (an Anglo-Franco-German publication) that the sociology of the professions was alive and undergoing a substantial reorientation. One of our objectives is to examine the recent British literature¹ and to draw some conclusions from it about the current state, and future directions, of the sociological study of the professions. These conclusions will be very different from those drawn by Hall and much more in line with those of Halliday.

Although we will not deal with the American literature in this article, it is important to point out that the study of the professions *is* also alive and well in American sociology. The years immediately preceding or succeeding Hall's review of the field witnessed major new studies of various professions, including medicine (Starr, 1982; Arney, 1982), law (Heinz and Lauman, 1982; Abbott, 1986), the clergy (Vera, 1982; Kleinman, 1984), corporate giving officers (Galaskiewicz, 1985), and scientists (Gieryn, Bevins, and Zehr, 1985). Furthermore, more general issues relating to the professions continued to occupy the attention of American sociologists (Freidson, 1986). For one thing, undoubtedly motivated by the dominance of the power paradigm, there was deep interest in the process of deprofessionalization (Betz and O'Connell, 1983; Rothman, 1984), or the loss of power by the professions. Relatedly, and more radically, there is interest in the more profound loss of power associated with the proletarianization of the professions (e.g. Derber, 1982; Whalley, 1985). Thus it is difficult to sustain Hall's perspective, even within the sociology of the professions in the United States.

More striking is the continued appearance of work on the professions in the American journal *Work and Occupations*, which Hall edited through the end of 1986. The best example is Forsyth and Danisiewicz's (1985) "Toward a Theory of Professionalization" (others are Cullen, 1985; Begun, 1986; and Baer, 1986). Forsyth and Danisiewicz (1985: 59) could well have been addressing Hall when they state early in their article, "The general aim of this article is to focus and rekindle interest in

theoretical explanation of professionalization" (Forsyth and Danisiewicz, 1985: 59). It could be argued that, as their own article indicates, there was no need to rekindle interest in the professions; it is clearly alive and well.

One should also note that in addition to the articles to be found in *Work and Occupations*, the past decade has seen the efflorescence of journals that deal with the sociology of the areas in which professionals work. Some of these are American (such as *Law and Society Review*), but many are wholly or largely British, for example, the *Journal of Law and Economics*, *Sociology of Health and Illness*, *Social Science and Medicine* (medical sociology), *Accountancy*, and *Organizations and Society*. These journals regularly carry articles that deal with the sociology of professional work.

A second issue raised by Hall's article relates to the preeminence of the power approach (Ritzer, 1975, 1977; Ritzer and Walczak, 1986) in the study of the professions. He concluded that "the nature of the professional model together with the more basic question of the nature of the professions appears to be a dead issue in the sociology of work and occupations" (Hall, 1983: 11). The reason for the apparent "death" of the study of the nature of the professions is the fact that a consensus appears to have emerged that the professions are defined by their power.

While Hall was according the power orientation preeminent status, one of the leaders in the paradigm shift in the direction of that approach, Eliot Freidson, announced (in an anthology edited by British sociologists):

The future of profession lies in embracing the concept as an intrinsically ambiguous, multifaceted folk concept, of which no single definition and no attempt at isolating its essence will ever be generally persuasive. Given the nature of the concept, such a theory is developed by recognising that there is no single, truly explanatory trait or characteristic—including such a recent candidate as "power"—that can join together all occupations called professions beyond the actual fact of coming to be called professions [Freidson, 1983: 32-33].

Thus one of the most important figures in the development of the power approach, Eliot Freidson, underscored its profound limitations at precisely the same point that Hall proclaimed the ascendancy of that approach. At the same time, Saks (1983) argued that many supporters of the power approach (and the other paradigms as well) have been content to make bald and unsubstantiated criticisms of the professions, rather than basing their positions on serious research. Clearly, from Saks's

point of view, the power approach is limited and in need of expansion and amplification.

The third issue relates to the future of the power approach. While Hall (1983) appears to accept the idea of the preeminence of the power paradigm, he also argues that "this theoretical closure may be premature in terms of providing a complete explanation of the power of the professions" (p. 12). Thus Hall admits there is more to be done, but in order to do it he suggests that we must move outside the sociological study of the professions and derive insights from recent developments in organizational theory as well as from the "popular view" of the professions. While these courses of action might well be useful, they seem to accept the idea that there is nothing more to be done within the sociology of the professions.

Some work within the American study of the professions stands in contradiction to Hall's perspective. Cullen (1985), for example, has urged an integration of functional and power perspectives on the professions. More importantly, Forsyth and Danisiewicz (1985), working within the power approach, have developed a comparatively elaborate, new, three-stage model of professionalization. They were able to test only a part of their model, clearly implying that there is more to be done with it, as well as with much else in the sociology of the professions. While the American literature shows continued openings in the sociology of the professions, this is even more true of British work in the field.

It is in the context of the issues raised by Hall that we need to turn to recent work in Great Britain on the professions. On the one hand, such an examination will indicate that the sociology of the professions is alive and well. On the other hand, such an examination of this literature raises questions about the position taken by both Hall and Freidson on the issue of the power paradigm. For one thing, that literature indicates that there are lessons to be learned *within* the field itself about the professions. For another, it also indicates the centrality of power in understanding the professions.

The British concentration on power does not, however, represent a direct refutation of Freidson's point because he is focusing on the defining characteristics of the professions while most British work is concerned with the place of the professions within the larger social structure. In fact, we feel that the most general point to be derived from the British literature is the futility of devoting so much attention to defining the professions. For example, Johnson (1982: 190) makes it clear that in analyzing the professions we are looking at historically and

nationally specific events that militate against a general definition (or theory) of the professions. While American sociologists have been obsessed with the problem of defining the professions, British sociologists, in the main, have been busy getting on with the business of studying the relationship between the professions and the larger society.

This difference between American and British studies of the professions is related, at least in part, to the ways in which the two groups carve up the social world. American students of the professions have been inclined to be specialists in the study of occupations. They have tended to look at occupations as distinct entities, often in isolation from their relationships to other social structures and social institutions. In contrast, British students of the professions have rarely studied them in isolation from other social phenomena. For one thing, British sociology has been characterized by an interest in the relationships among and between professions and occupations. A good example is Larkin's (1983) examination of the relationship between medicine and ophthalmic opticians, radiographers, physiotherapists, and chiropodists. For another, British scholars (e.g., Johnson, 1982; Portwood and Fielding, 1980) have been interested in the relationship between the professions and the polity. Finally, there is a deep interest (e.g., Portwood and Fielding, 1981; Macdonald, 1984) in the link between the professions and the stratification system. In fact, the study of the professions has generally been linked, if not subordinated, to the study of social stratification and the polity.

Thus one of the differences between American and British studies of the professions has been the tendency of Americans to focus on specific professions, while the British have been concerned with their linkages to other occupations and institutions. Focusing on specific professions (e.g., Freidson, 1970; Starr, 1982), American sociologists have tended to be descriptive and atheoretical. In contrast, British students of the professions have tended to be much more theoretical, relying heavily on Marxian, Weberian, and Durkheimian traditions in their analyses of the professions.

There has also tended to be a strong political difference between the orientations of American and British students of the professions. American sociologists, especially those associated with the process and structural-functional paradigms, have tended to be accepting, even praising, of the professions. While this has changed in recent years, in part because the supporters of the power approach came to the fore because of their criticisms of the conservatism of the traditional orientations, that approach within American sociology is still not as

critical as the British approaches have been. For one thing, British analyses have often been linked to a tradition of critical interest in societal elites. For another, British sociologists have been more animated by impassioned efforts to reveal the role of professionals in a capitalist conspiracy, in the control and exploitation of the market for professional services, and so forth.

Before we go too far with this, it is important to underscore the point that studies of the professions in the two countries have not been isolated from one another; in fact there has been considerable cross-fertilization. American students of the professions have been profoundly influenced by people like Carr-Saunders and Wilson, Millerson, Reader, and Johnson, while Americans such as Parsons, Hughes, Freidson, and Larson have had a strong following among British students of the professions. In fact, there has been some tendency for the American influence to push British sociologists to search for the distinctive traits of the professions, while the British influence has led some Americans to look at the link between the professions and the larger society.

In terms of the latter, one hopeful sign is Freidson's (1986) *Professional Powers*, which is strongly influenced by the British literature on the professions, and is concerned, in part, with the development of the professions in Great Britain. Coincidentally, this work is attuned to the linkage between the professions and legal and political institutions. Another promising work is Abbott's (1986) comparative study of American and British lawyers. Not only does this work show the influence of the British literature, but it is attuned to the competitive relationship between the legal profession, other professions, corporations, and the state.

Our objective in this article is to review recent work on the professions published in Britain, mainly by British sociologists, with a view to trying to derive lessons from that literature that might prove useful to American students of the professions. We do not mean to imply that British scholars are faultless and we will have occasion to underscore problems in the British literature.

To anticipate our main conclusion, it is our view that what may be dead in the American sociological study of the professions is the frustrating search to find the characteristics that differentiate professions from all other occupations. It may be that Freidson is correct and that American students of the professions should simply accept the "folk" conception of the professions and get on with the business of studying the professions as well as their linkages to the larger society. It is here

that the lessons from the British literature come into play, since it has always been more concerned with these more macroscopic issues than with the problem of seeking to differentiate professions from other occupations. Furthermore, while such studies have been, and will continue to be, concerned with the issue of power, they do not point to the unquestioned ascendancy of the power paradigm, but rather to the fact that the study of the relationship between power and the professions will continue to be clarified, extended, and perhaps even superseded. The fact is that the power approach, at least as it is practiced by most Americans, is really another version of the propensity to try to find the distinctive traits of the professions. It is limited in scope, overly simplistic, and a product of the times (that is, reactions to the dominance of the structural-functional approach and the burgeoning of criticisms of it). At the minimum, the power approach will be greatly amplified so that its focus becomes more a concern for the role of the professions in the larger society and less a concern for power as the distinguishing characteristic of the professions. We must be wary of premature closure on the power paradigm and it is the British literature that points us in the direction of the many open questions in need of answers.

As indicated above, the British literature deals with work in three main areas; inter- and intraprofessional conflicts, professions and the polity, and professions and social stratification. While many recent studies address more than one of these concerns, it is nonetheless convenient to group them in this way in the review that follows.

Moreover, it is inherent in the British tendency to study the professions in their social context that there is greater reference to, or even a priority given to, theory, especially Marxian and Weberian theory. Our review of the three substantive areas will be infused with, and concluded by, a discussion of theoretical issues.

INTER- AND INTRAPROFESSIONAL CONFLICTS

British students of the professions have been heavily influenced by Weber's (1968: 936) formulations on class and status that lead one to expect conflicts between and within occupational groups. This is clearly demonstrated in studies of the development of the medical profession in Britain (Parry and Parry, 1976; Waddington, 1977) This research also delineates one of the basic *casus belli* in the world of expert occupations—the dilemma of exclusiveness versus market control.² In order to control the market, the occupational body must include anyone with a

reasonable claim to expertise, but such inclusion brings in marginal practitioners, who lower the standing of higher-status members.

In mid-nineteenth century Britain, the medical profession displayed conflict in complex form because three professional bodies competed: the physicians, who were long-established and had the highest social cachet; the surgeons, who had dissociated themselves from the barbers and were on the way up; and the apothecaries, who were widely accepted as skilled practitioners, but who bore the taint of "trade." In addition to these licensing bodies, also in contention was the newly formed British Medical Association.³ After more than 20 years of political and legislative in-fighting, the Medical Act of 1858 set the seal on a series of compromises whereby the higher-status groups partially relaxed their exclusiveness and gained not only state regulation of the whole occupation, but control over the regulative machinery.

Studies of the formation of the British medical profession in this crucible of conflict have stimulated British sociologists (for example, Larkin, 1983; Macdonald, 1985, 1986) to examine other aspects of historical development that involve a clash between the need for exclusivity and the drive for market control. In particular, this recent work shows that expert occupations must continually strive to (a) mark out the territory they wish to monopolize, (b) control as much as possible of the adjacent terrain without allowing a dilution of power or prestige by too close association with subordinate groups (both these objectives bring the occupation into contention with other occupational groups), and (c) regulate relations and the distribution of power between sections and specialities, ensuring that internal stress does not lead to fission with a consequent diminution of control. The pursuit of these goals by expert occupations has generated conflicts, both within and between occupations, that are of considerable sociological interest.

Larkin's (1983) study of four paramedical groups is a notable example of interoccupational struggle. This can be seen as a continuation of the interest in conflict among medical professionals, although now the focus has shifted to the dominance of doctors and their "occupational imperialism" (Larkin, 1983: 14). This term is not used as a general metaphor for dominance, but as one that indicates parallels in this occupational sphere with the international political phenomenon of imperialism. That is, the international division of labor and the underdevelopment of nations are mirrored in the paramedical division of labor and the underdevelopment of skills in, for example, radiography or physiotherapy. In this way the medical profession maintains its hegemony over the whole field and thereby ensures its own rewards and

prestige. At the same time, the division of labor gives an assurance of rewards and a definition of market to lower-status groups, while the association with a high-status group bestows on them a certain prestige. However, as Larkin emphasizes, “occupational imperialism” is not intended to connote an ossified skill distribution but an *arena* of tension and conflict between groups, which is largely shaped in outcome by the differential access of each group to exterior power sources” (Larkin, 1983: 17; emphasis added).

The idea of an arena has also been employed by Macdonald (1985) in a study of the accountancy profession in Britain. Although the Institute of Chartered Accountants (analogous with, though not identical to, CPAs in the United States) moved into a position of preeminence in the decades following their foundation in 1880, this was achieved and subsequently maintained only in the course of a prolonged battle with other groups of accountants and with the state. While chartered accountants were united in their conflict with the state, especially over its desire to create state functionaries to perform duties that would otherwise have fallen to public accountants, they were seriously divided over the best strategy for establishing control and monopoly over the market for accountancy services.

While a number of other recent British publications—Davis (1980), Donnison (1977), and Honigsbaum (1979)—have documented the nature of professional work and how it is constituted, others have also examined inter- and intraprofessional conflict (e.g., Holloway, Jewson, and Mason, 1986; Podmore, 1980). More importantly, such conflicts are conceptualized as taking place within an arena defined by an ongoing power *struggle*. Power is not seen merely as another kind of “trait” or as part of a “process” (Begun, 1986: 115; Rothman, 1984). This “processual” view is presumed to be different from structural-functionalism, but it displays not only the same determinist assumptions, but subsumes external threats, struggles, competing occupations, and contested claims to privilege under the bland term “process.” British sociologists have been less likely to succumb to reified “trait” or “process” frameworks, but rather have looked at the dynamics of conflict within and between professions.

The dynamic concept of “arena” seems a much more appropriate metaphor with which to approach such conflicts than Hall’s (1983: 12) use of “niche,” which indicates how he tends to see the power approach in static terms. There is nothing in the studies discussed above to suggest that expert occupations arrive at clearly defined destinations, but rather that any stability or security of position must be maintained by constant

activity to mobilize the membership to contest any encroachment and to advance the boundaries of their professional territory.

One other point is worth underscoring here. British researchers have been much more inclined to look at the arena of professional conflict within the context of historical development and change. Although there are exceptions (e.g., Starr, 1982), American sociologists have been much more likely to analyze the professions ahistorically and conceptually. This fundamental difference helps us understand why the British prefer a concept like “arena” while Americans are more prone to use a term like “niche.”

PROFESSIONS AND THE STATE

Another distinctive British concern is the relationship between the professions and the state. In fact, this topic developed out of the concern for professional power and it is appropriate that it has been addressed most fully by Johnson (1982), since he was the author of the seminal work in the power paradigm, *Professions and Power* (Johnson, 1972). In his original formulation, Johnson set out three ideal-typical professions, the least powerful of which is the “mediative” professions: their practice and their clients being to an important extent defined by the state. Since these categories are ideal types, it follows that the real world contains mixed types or even that a characteristic—such as state control—applies in some measure to all.

It is this latter point that is the stimulus for Johnson’s (1982) paper and his view that the development of professional occupations can be seen in terms of the opposition between state intervention and professional autonomy. His argument is that, in England at least, “the transition to capitalism in England was not marked by a separation of economic and political institutions but an historically unique articulation that involved the interrelated processes of state formation and professionalisation” (p. 188). This position is illustrated by two case studies: One is the relation between the legal profession and the state and the other is the way in which professional organizations (with particular reference to medicine, accountancy, and architecture) played a part in the development of the imperial state. These studies lead to the conclusion that

the relationship of state to professions presents itself as one of constant struggle and seeming hostility while at the same time constituting an

interdependent structure. The view that professionalisation is not a single process with a given end-state also suggests that the relationship with changing state forms is in flux. This in turn gives rise to constant social ambiguity and ambivalence, a condition which under specific historical conditions may well be of crucial importance in the wider relations of class and state. To claim that the modern professions are a product of state formation does not entail a view of profession as universally the "servants of power" [Johnson, 1982: 207-208].

While Johnson's work is undoubtedly the most thoroughgoing examination of the state/profession connection at the societal level, other British papers also give it serious attention. Portwood and Fielding (1981: 762) put some emphasis on "negotiations with the national-legal state" as important means by which professional occupations enhance their privilege. Johnson (1982: 201) refers to the particular case of accountants and their attempts to obtain legal registration, but this remarkable series of endeavors to secure a monopoly of public accountancy practice has been documented in detail and analyzed by Macdonald (1984, 1985), who sees these moves toward social closure in Weberian terms in contrast to Johnson's neo-Marxism. These steps are viewed as taking place within a professional arena in which professional groups within an occupation struggle with each other, with other occupations, and with the state for control of professional practice and for its market.

Fielding and Portwood (1981: 49-50) have a similar orientation (although they use a different terminology) when they set their study "within a whole matrix of relationships between a given profession, the state, other professions, occupations and interested bodies in related fields of employment and the clientele." Fielding and Portwood appear to propose the replacement of Johnson's (1972: 26) category of "mediative" (or rather, his subcategory of "state mediation") by a typology of bureaucratic professions. The two dimensions of this typology are public/private (workplace and practice) and dependence/autonomy in relation to the state. The resulting classification is valuable in furthering understanding of "the relationships between professions and the state in late twentieth century Britain" (Fielding and Portwood, 1981: 49). In particular, they conclude that "a formal working relationship has in the case of almost all professions been established between them and the state." It follows that they question the validity of such concepts as "semiprofession" and "deprofessionalization." In the case of the former term, they argue that an occupation's relationship with the state generates a limited number of *types* of

profession and that it renders redundant the term “semiprofession,” which, they claim, is consonant with a continuum, not a typology. In relation to the latter, they argue that “few professions have lost status, social position and autonomy by virtue of state heteronomy and that for most professions the interdependent processes of bureaucratization and professionalization have been to the benefit of both themselves and the state” (p. 48). Larkin (1983: 33, 186) has criticized Fielding and Portwood for a tendency, in some empirical examples, to underestimate the extent of state heteronomy, but on the whole their conceptualization and empirical material on education college lecturers and ophthalmic opticians in Britain enhances one’s understanding of the state/profession relationship.

Some echoes of this interest in the professions in relation to, or even as an articulation of, the state can be found in the American literature. Larson, for example, refers to the professions’ reliance on the state (1977: 53) and uses quotation marks when referring to state “neutrality” and “professional independence” (Larson, 1977: 169); she also observes that “organizational professions are generated . . . by the expansion of the bureaucratic apparatus of the state” (p. 179). But the general tenor of her work, and its emphasis on the professional project and collective social mobility, is Weberian rather than Marxian, for all that she quotes with approval Polyani’s remark that “there was nothing natural about *laissez-faire* . . . *laissez-faire* was itself enforced by the state . . . [it] was not a method to achieve a thing, it was *the thing to be achieved*” (p. 53). Her conclusions include a Marxian analysis of professional labor, but not of the professions in relation to the state.

This view of Larson’s work can also be found in Halliday (1983: 345), although it is in a later paper (1985) that he discusses the relationship of the professions to the state. He argues that the scope and intensity of the potential and actual influence of the professions on the government is a partial function of their relative standing on four dimensions: Their epistemological foundations; the forms of authority they can exercise; the institutional loci of professional work; and the organizational properties of collegial associations. Such an examination of the attributes of professions—cognitive, institutional, and organizational—may seem at first glance like trait theory. However, Halliday is not concerned with distinguishing between professions and nonprofessions, but rather in understanding the differences that exist among professions in the scope and intensity of their collective actions vis-à-vis the state. He concludes:

First, a differentiation among professions in terms of the *scope* of their influence will be a principal, but not exclusive, function of *epistemology*, and its implications for authority and spheres of influence. Second, a differentiation among professions in terms of the *intensity* of influence will be a principal, but not exclusive, function of *organization*. With respect to the first proposition . . . scientific professions . . . may have a narrower scope of influence, while normative professions . . . may have a broad scope of influence, with the military and academics having a somewhat equivocal intermediate status. That is, because a scientific epistemological base impedes the translation of technical into moral authority and largely confines such a profession to primary institutional spheres, the horizons of its influence will be severely circumscribed. The obverse case obtains for normative professions [clergy and law] [Halliday, 1985: 441].

The American literature on the professions is generally less interested in the relationship between professions and the state. This can perhaps be explained by the cultural variation between the United States and Britain. There is within the notion of professionalization a range of possibilities from entrepreneur to “free” professional to functionary, and the legal and medical professions in America show the first of these much more clearly than their British counterparts. There are other variations that become apparent in, for example, accountancy and law, if European societies are brought into the comparison. This cultural variation, together with the point emphasized by a number of American writers (Berlant, 1975; Kronus, 1976) that the development of professions occurred during a period of *laissez-faire*, may account, to some extent, for the comparative lack of interest in the state by American sociologists of the professions.

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION AND THE PLACE OF THE PROFESSIONS

A concern for the place of the professions (and, more generally, the middle class) in the stratification system, and the role of Marxian and Weberian theory in understanding their position, defines British work and stands in contrast to that of American researchers.

Johnson (1980: 335) provides a useful starting point for the consideration of this British orientation, as well as the debate between Marxian and Weberian views. Johnson argues that in basing the power of professions on knowledge, the “Weberian model” does *not* offer a factor

with a potency equivalent to that of capital (Weber, 1968: 304). The Weberian analysis contains nothing to show what kind of knowledge or technique is sufficiently socially valuable to bestow power. It is, Johnson suggests, no better than technological determinism. However, the Marxian alternative, by putting the relations of production, and hence the division of labor, at the center of the analysis, does show what knowledge is valuable and therefore which positions in the social formation possess the potential for the exercise of power on the basis of knowledge. This view is part of a comprehensive Marxian view of class structure and forms the basis for looking at three particular aspects of class relations, namely, appropriation, realization of capital, and reproduction of the relations of production.

These Johnson examines with reference to the professions' place in the antagonistic relations of production and therefore their place in the class structure. He "presents an analysis of the ways in which various 'professions' differentially relate to the dual structures generated by the antagonistic relations of capital and labor in respect to the primary functions [appropriation of surplus value] and secondary functions [realisation of capital] and reproduction [of relations of production], functions that generate parallel mechanisms of social control central to the maintenance of the expansionary dynamics of capital." Of the sections dealing with these three functions, that on "realisation" is the longest and shows how the activities of the accountancy profession are a significant part of the "mechanisms of control associated with realisation." "Realisation" refers to the practices followed by financial and accounting institutions acting both on their own behalf and in the execution of fiscal requirements (e.g., banks, insurance companies, accountancy firms). Johnson (1980: 361) concludes:

The authority of "professionals" within bureaucratic contexts will be determined by the manner in which their work activities articulate with or relate to these dual processes: in carrying out the functions of capital or the collective laborer at the level of appropriation or realization. Thus, any analysis of the relationship between the organization of occupational knowledge as work and social class formation must consider the complex outcome of these dual processes: an outcome which cannot be conceptualized by either the one-dimensional model of bureaucratic coordination or the single dichotomy of ownership or non-ownership of production.

Johnson's paper is an application of ideas set out elsewhere (1977) and deriving from Carchedi's (1975) theory about how the "new middle class" could be accounted for in Marxian terms. Carchedi's (1977)

version of the Marxian theory of class also makes an appearance in another recent attempt to place the professions in the context of stratification, namely, in Boreham's (1983) paper on "indetermination." Boreham examines the ways in which knowledge and power have been conceptualized in the study of the professions, and the assumptions that have been made about the position of professionals in organizations and in social structure more generally. In his view, many of the conclusions drawn about the autonomy, legitimacy, and power of professionals overlook the fact that it is only by "identification with appropriate recognised norms and values in the context of the capitalist organisation of the labour process" and by following "rules (that) originate primarily from the superordinate structural level of economic relationships worked out through the capitalist mode of production" (p. 713-714) that professionals achieve and maintain their position.

This view leads, Boreham concludes, to another point, which he proposes to examine in a later paper, namely, that capitalist hegemony is maintained "not only through control of the production of commodities and the reproduction of commodity relations at the point of production but also through the integration of new occupational strata into class alliances." In this perspective, the professions not only attune themselves to the values of capitalism, but they are also rewarded by incorporation into the upper strata of society, where their ideology of service, altruism, and so forth, in "a calling," serves "to disguise the contradictions that develop at the level of production and of the organization of labor process" (p. 713-714; quoting Palloix, 1976: 60-62).

Murphy (1984) also considers whether the strength and independence of professional power has been overstated. Unlike Boreham, however, he approaches this topic from a Weberian point of view and takes as his point of departure Parkin's (1979) discussion of credentialism and closure and compares it with those of Weber (1968) and Collins (1979). Like Boreham, Murphy concludes that Parkin overrates the market/class position of professionals:

In capitalist society, property is the principal form of exclusion and credentials (putative skills) constitute an important but derivative form of exclusion (if they are derived from private property) or contingent form of exclusion (if they are not). This tandem structure of exclusion means that credentialed groups are themselves excluded by the more important form of exclusion based on property [Murphy, 1984: 561].

He also shows how closure theory (as well as the "Marxian alternative") can explain the subdivisions in class structure, but he echoes Boreham's

conclusion about the capitalist dominance of credentialist strata—although without any reference to Marxian writers so prominent in Boreham's paper.

Macdonald (1984) also makes use of social class concepts derived from Weber to examine the establishment, in the mid-nineteenth century, of the Scottish accountancy profession, the first in the world. Like the work of Portwood and Fielding, this paper employs the notion of an "unresolved dialectic" (or, as Johnson (1980) has it, "an historical juncture") between the status values of tradition and modern society. In the case of Scottish accountants, the ascribed attributes of accountants with origins in the existing gentry and bourgeoisie were used to establish the acceptability of a new professional group that would, once established, emphasize their achieved characteristics. In a further paper, Macdonald (1985) uses the explicitly Weberian concept of social closure to examine the development of the accountancy profession in England and to show how the *legal* closure achieved by accountants in the United States and Europe eluded English accountants. The story of their pursuit of this objective shows, however, that they did achieve a de facto monopoly and at a period early enough to ensure their domination of public accountancy not only in England, but originally (c. 1900) in the United States as well.

Halliday (1983) is even more explicit in his espousal of Weberian concepts in dealing with professions and social class. His objective in this paper is to use Larson's (1977) model of historical sociology as a basis for a critique of Auerbach's (1976) social history of American lawyers, but this leads to what he sees as a weakness in Larson's conceptualization, especially the way her *soi-disant* Marxian approach appears closer to that of Weber. He also suggests that Parry and Parry (1976) are to be applauded for basing their study of the rise of the British medical profession on the theoretical work of Giddens (1973), but notes that they fail to carry their theoretical argument through to their empirical conclusions. He concludes that the explicitly Weberian concepts of Parkin (1979) could be fruitfully applied to these studies as a means of placing professions within the system of social stratification.

SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY AND THE STUDY OF THE PROFESSIONS

Not only have British students of the professions tended to be more theoretical than their American counterparts, but they have tended to

draw on different theoretical sources. American studies of the professions can be conveniently grouped under the headings of process, structural-functional, and power paradigms (Ritzer and Walczak, 1986: 61).⁴ British studies fall less readily into these categories. This is due in large measure to the fact that they rely on a different conceptualization from that of American writers who derive their theories, albeit at several removes, from structural-functionalism or the Chicago school of the sociology of occupations. The British writers discussed in this article tend to turn rather to the theories of Weber and/or Marx and to more recent writers deriving from them. Some, such as Murphy (1984) and Larkin (1983), are more interested in Weberian ideas; others, for example, Johnson (1977) and Boreham (1983), build on Marxian concepts; some, like Saks (1983), draw on both. The Weberians are strongly interested in the concept of social closure as a mechanism for the creation and defense of a privileged social position and the writings of Parkin are frequently cited. They are also interested in the notion of society as an arena in which competing groups strive for advantage against each other and against the state. While some authors (e.g., Portwood and Fielding, 1981) take the middle ground, the Marxians dispute the validity of both these concepts. Class position is seen not as an outcome of collective effort, but as determined by capitalist relations of production, and the Marxists' empirical and theoretical work is often designed to show how a profession fits into the processes of capital and labor. The notion of the state as an independent agency that holds the ring and from whom concessions may be wrung is strongly disputed, for the professions are seen as a means whereby the state is articulated, while state power is hidden behind an ideology of altruism and service.

There is little sign of either the neo-Marxian or the neo-Weberian school of thought gaining the upper hand in the British sociology of the professions. While there is some tendency for the protagonists to talk past each other, the general impression given by the theoretical aspects of writings published in Britain on the sociology of the professions is that this sector of the discipline is in a vigorous state. Having drawn a general distinction between the theoretical orientations of the American and British students of the professions, it is important to point to some American exceptions. The most notable is Larson (1977, 1980), who, while taking a generally Weberian line in *The Rise of Professionalism*, also draws on Marx, especially in the later chapters of that book, while in *Proletarianization and Educated Labor* (1980) she takes Marx and Braverman as her starting point. More recently, Whalley (1985) and Derber (1982) have drawn on similar theoretical sources as well as the

French "new working class" school of thought stemming from Mallett (1975). Nonetheless, even this sector of the American literature is mainly concerned to show that professionals are likely to lose their elevated social position, because the nature of their work is changing. These findings are not tied into one of the more general theories of stratification, such as Carchedi (1977) or Wright (1978). Ironically, it is the British authors (Johnson, Boreham, Saks, etc.) who relate these findings to the work of those American theorists.

REASONS FOR THE DIFFERENCES IN THE STUDY OF THE PROFESSIONS

One issue that has been touched on throughout this article is the reasons for the differences in the study of the professions in the United States and Great Britain.⁵ Two general sets of factors suggest themselves. The first (involving a sociology of knowledge approach) relates to differences in the two societies and the second (a sociology of science approach) involves variations in the way the professions have been studied sociologically in the two nations.

In terms of differences in the two societies, of greatest importance is the fact that the histories of the professions (the greater likelihood of free professions in the United States and of organizationally based and constrained professions in Britain) have differed in the two societies. Beyond this are innumerable other societal differences, such as those in the political and stratification systems.

Turning to differences in the sociology of the professions, American sociologists have been more likely to be atheoretical; when they have utilized theories, they have been likely to use theories indigenous to the study of the professions; they have tended to focus on specific professions, the professions in general, or the defining characteristics of the professions; and they have tended to be accepting of the professions. In contrast, the British students have tended to be more theoretical; they have been more influenced by broader theories; they have focused more on the place of the professions in the larger society; and they have been more critical of them.

While there are signs of convergence in the study of the professions in the two societies, even greater gains are likely to be made when such a convergent perspective is brought to bear on the comparative study of professions in these (and other) societies. Since substantial differences remain between the professions in the United States and in Britain, such research should allow us to better understand to what degree national

variations in the sociology of the professions were the result of differences between the professions in the two societies (sociology of knowledge) or traceable to differences in the way they were studied (sociology of science).

CONCLUSION

This survey of work on the sociology of the professions in British publications shows that the announcement of the demise of work on this topic was premature. Exciting, theoretically informed work on the professions continues apace in Great Britain, especially on the issues of inter- and intraprofessional conflicts, the professions and the state, and the place of the professions in the stratification system. Such work is not only important in itself, but also for the role it can play as a model for future American researchers and theorists, who would be well advised to move away from their traditional emphasis on reified trait, process, or power models of the professions.

Studies in Britain on how the professions have acted to secure their market domination, autonomy, and respectability leads to the conclusion that the professions will *continue* to strive to maintain their status, to expand their hegemony, to defend their privilege, and to interact with the state. Such actions will give the sociology of the professions fresh data to relate to the concepts and theories currently being developed. Changes in technology, law, and social values will have consequences for the services provided by the professions, for professional "segments," and for the boundaries between them; such changes will also bring them into interaction (and quite probably into conflict) with the state. Occupational associations will continue to respond with efforts to maintain and, if possible, enhance their position in the stratification system.

British work on the sociology of the professions serves notice of a lively period to come of sociological theory and research on the professions.

NOTES

1. Most of this material is written by British sociologists, but a few of the works have been written by Canadians, Australians, and New Zealanders. The crucial point is that they have all been published, and found a receptive audience, in Great Britain.

2. It is interesting to note that some American sociologists who have studied the professions at least in part in England are also sensitive to this issue, for example, Berlant (1975), Kronus (1976), and Larson (1977). It is also apparent in some mainstream American works (e.g., Gieryn, Bevins, and Zehr, 1985).

3. Besides these competing groups, tension also existed between the metropolis and the provinces and between doctors of English, Scottish, and Irish qualification.

4. However, some recent American work (Derber, 1982; Starr, 1982; Goldstein, 1984; Whalley, 1985) does not fit so easily into these categories.

5. We would like to thank Tom DiPrete for suggesting the need for this discussion.

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